

Future of Work Commission

**Testimony by Michael Baldino, Director and General
Counsel, Massachusetts Broadband Institute**

October 26, 2021



MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE

OUR MISSION:

We strengthen the competitiveness of the tech and innovation economy by driving strategic investments, partnerships, and insights that harness the talent of Massachusetts.



THE INNOVATION INSTITUTE

Mission:

*Innovation
Economy*



MASSACHUSETTS CENTER for
ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Mission:

*Advanced
Manufacturing*



MASSACHUSETTS
BROADBAND INSTITUTE

Mission:

Broadband



MASSACHUSETTS
eHEALTH INSTITUTE

Mission:

*Digital Health
and Caregiving*

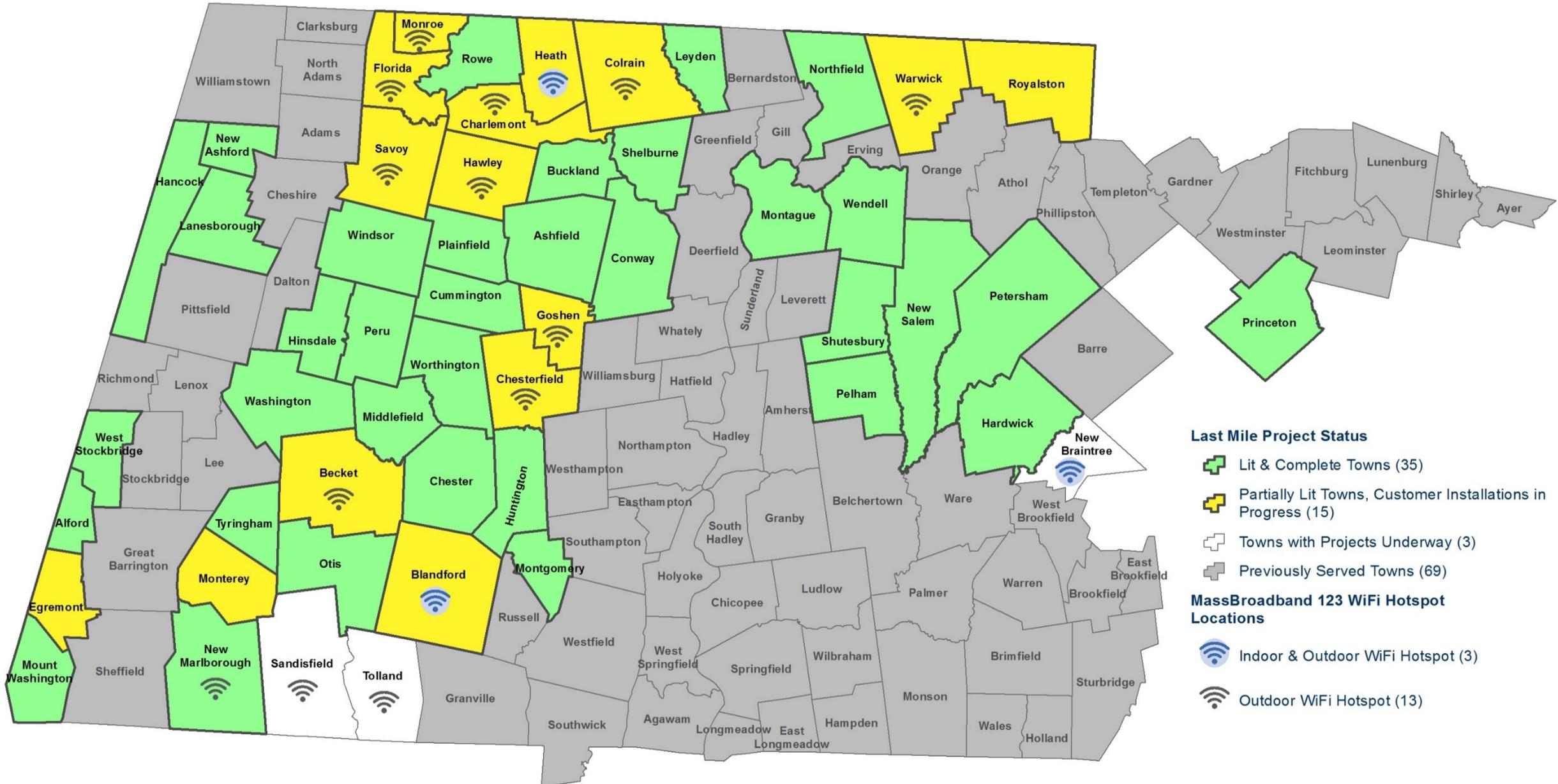


Mission:

Cybersecurity

MBI's mission is to make affordable high-speed Internet available to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices, and other public places across the Commonwealth. MBI works closely with key stakeholders to bridge the digital divide in Massachusetts.

Addressing the Rural Digital Divide - Today 50 of the 53 Last Mile Towns have subscribers receiving service.



The Digital Divide describes the gap between people who have access to affordable, reliable Internet service (and the skills and devices necessary to take advantage of that access)—and those who lack it.

Digital Equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

Achieving Digital Equity Is Essential For:

Job Seekers

- More than a third of Americans without internet service have difficulty creating professional resumes, contacting an employer via email, or filling out an online job application. (Pew Research Center)
- More than 80% of Fortune 500 companies now only accept job applications online. Job seekers without broadband connections are therefore left at a disadvantage compared to their digitally equipped peers.
- 87% of recruiters use LinkedIn to check candidates (Jobvite Recruiter Nation Report)

Workforce Development

- The demand for digital skills is increasing rapidly, even among low skill occupations.
- For middle-skill jobs that offer family-sustaining wages, the vast majority of positions require the ability to operate a computer, access the internet, and use spreadsheets and word processing software. (Urban Institute).
- 48% of hiring managers say that candidates lack the skills needed to fill open jobs.
- By 2030, the number of work hours using basic digital skills will increase by 69%, including workers in the manufacturing, health care and energy sectors.

Small Business Owners

- Lack of access to broadband has made it difficult for many small businesses to provide documentation to apply for recovery loans and to access certain Covid-19 small business grant programs. Many small business owners, particularly in low income neighborhoods do not have a business email, a web presence and cannot process credit card transactions.

The Workforce of the Future – Creating a Supportive Learning Environment for K-12 Students

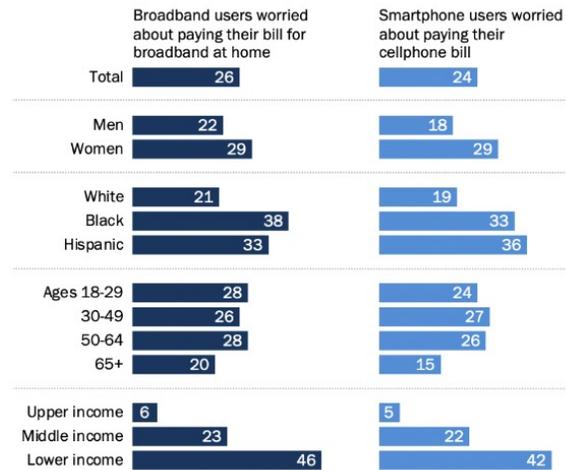
- Nearly one-quarter of Gateway City parents reported difficulty using the computer systems required for remote learning. (MassINC)
- Residents of Gateway Cities are twice as likely to not use email, which is a measure of basic digital literacy. This means that approximately 14,000 Gateway City households with school-age children have at least one adult who may need digital literacy training and assistance. (MassINC)

Broadband is a poverty issue – 30% of Massachusetts households with incomes below \$35,000 do not have broadband subscriptions of any kind. For households with incomes over \$75,000, that figure is 3% (statistics cited by Angela Siefer of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance in testimony before the Massachusetts Senate on April 6, 2021)

Broadband is a race issue – Those least likely to have broadband are communities of color. Majority-white neighborhoods in the United States had a broadband adoption rate of 83.7%; Majority-black neighborhoods had a broadband adoption rate of 67.4% (2020 Brookings Institute Report).

Tech users with lower incomes are more likely to be worried about paying their digital tech bills

% of home broadband and smartphone users who say they worry a lot or some about paying their bills over the next few months for ...

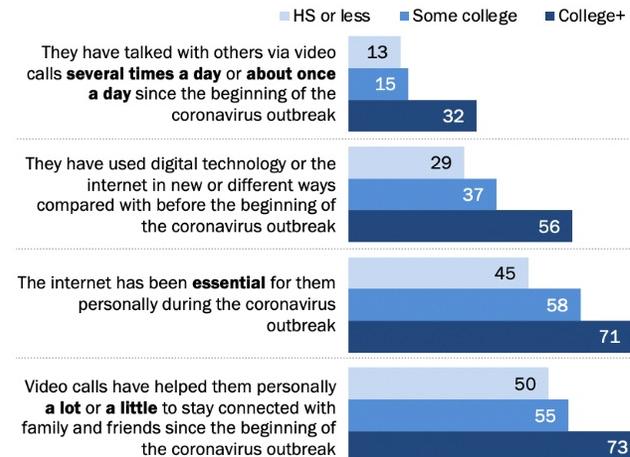


Note: White and Black adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2019 earnings. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 12-18, 2021. "The Internet and the Pandemic"

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Adults with a bachelor's, advanced degree more likely than others to make daily video calls, use tech in new ways, consider internet essential amid COVID-19

% of U.S. adults who say ...

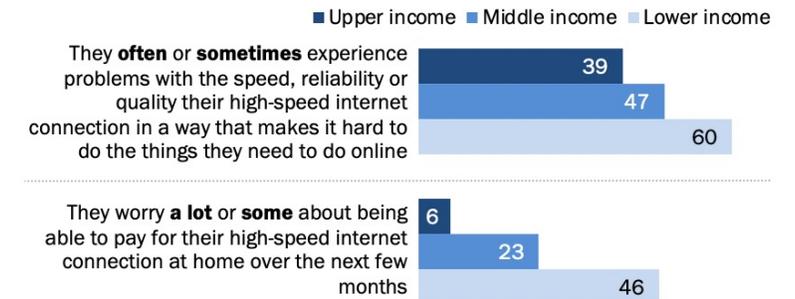


Note: Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 12-18, 2021. "The Internet and the Pandemic"

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60% of broadband users with lower incomes often or sometimes have connection problems, and 46% are worried at least some about paying for broadband

% of U.S. home broadband users who say ...



Note: Income tiers are based on adjusted 2019 earnings. Those who did not give an answer or who gave other responses are not shown.

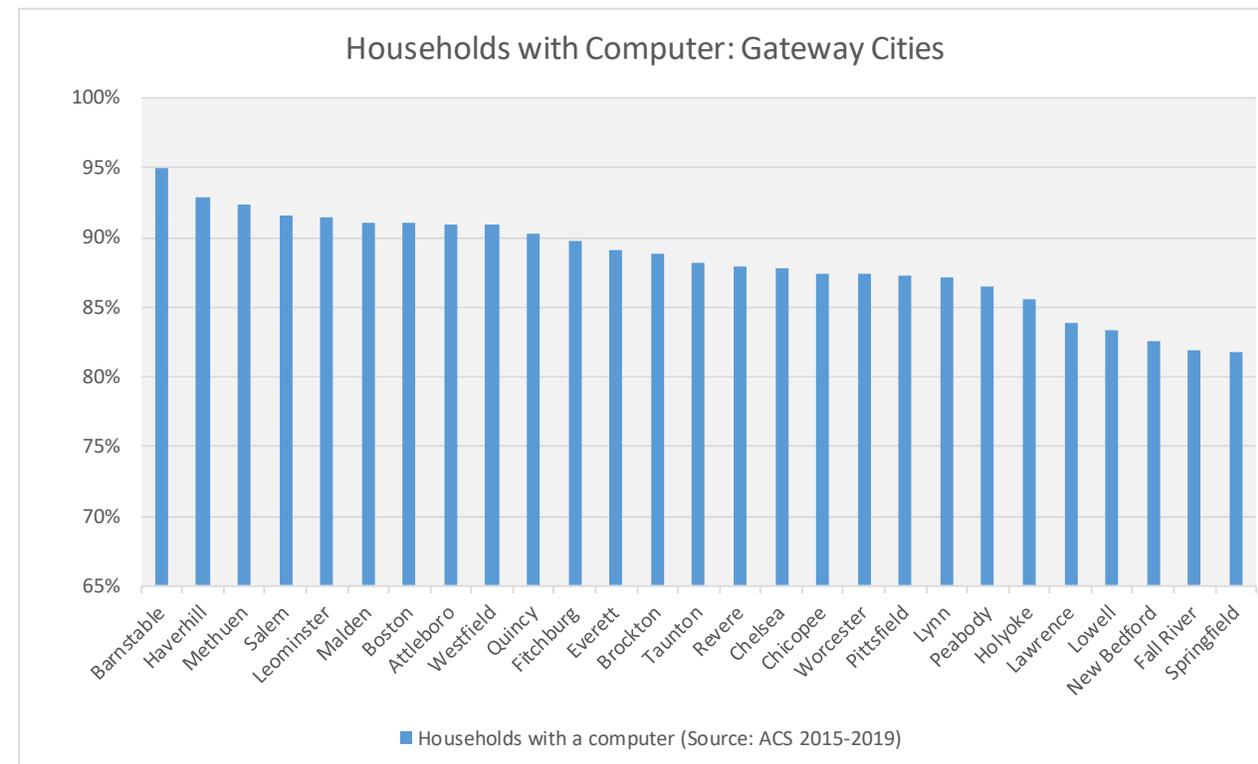
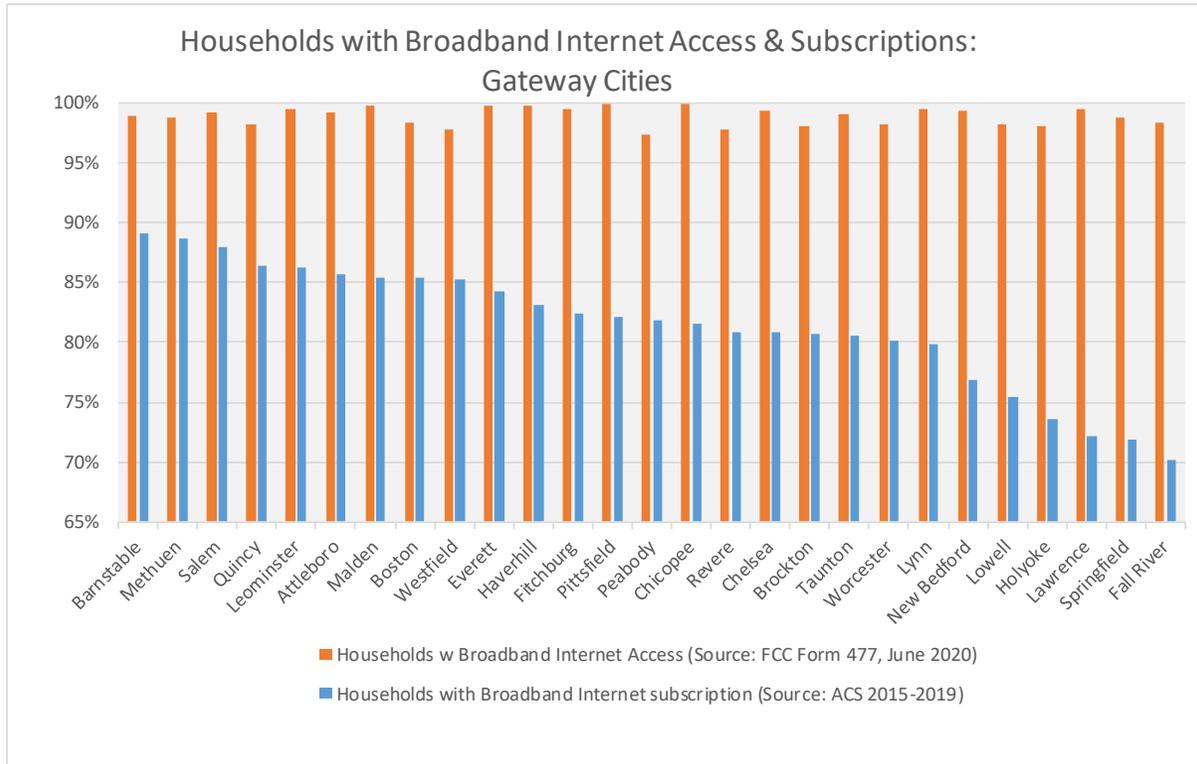
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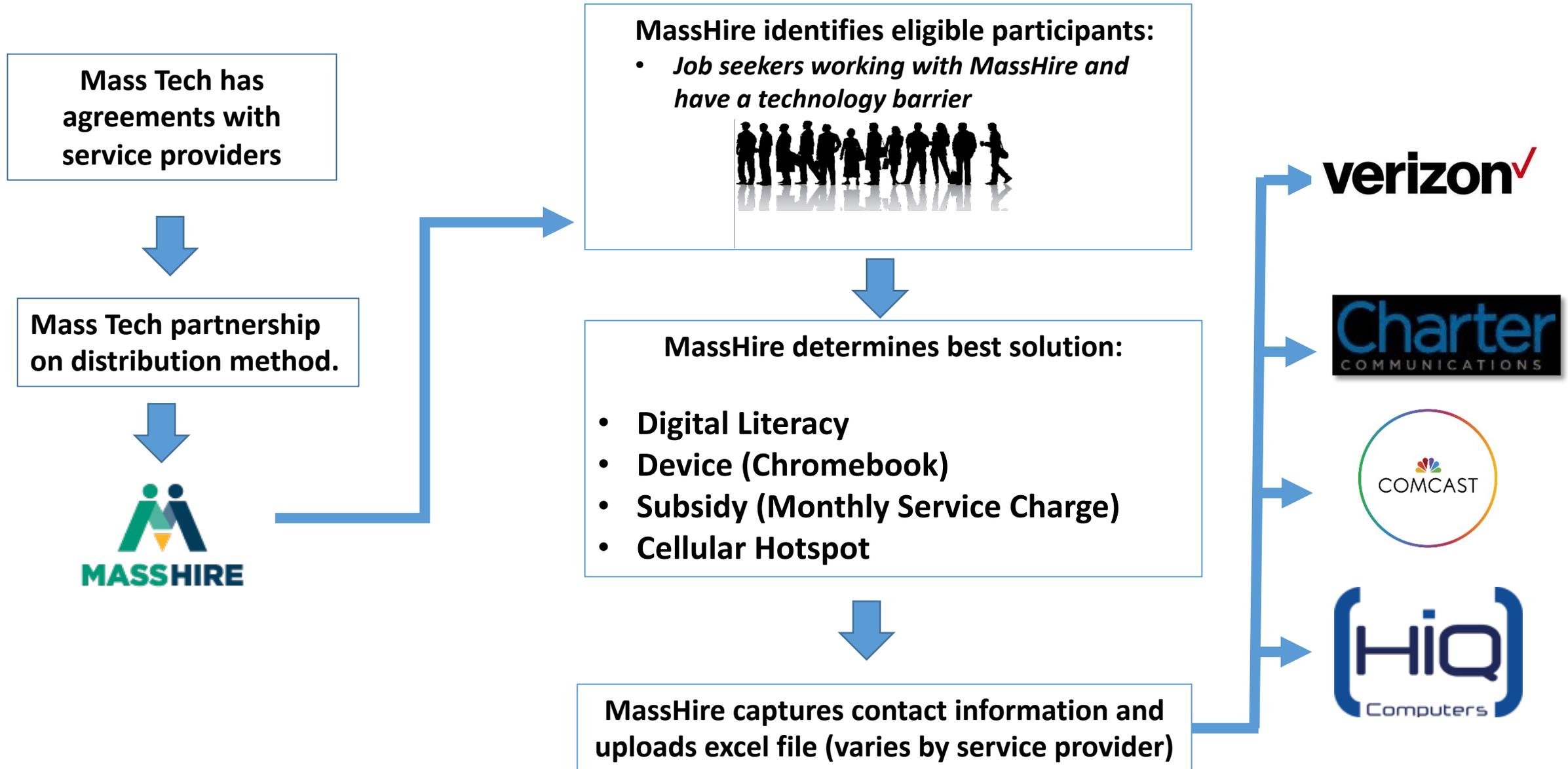
"The Internet and the Pandemic"

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Gateway Cities Are Disproportionately Impacted by the Digital Divide

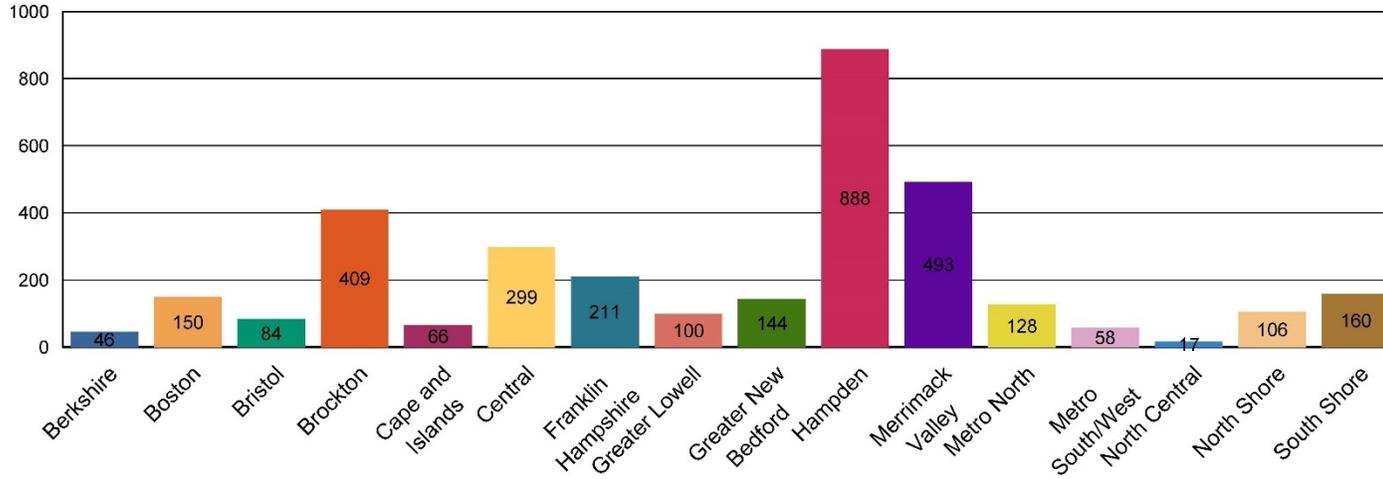
- Entering the pandemic, nearly 25% of Gateway City households did not have a subscription internet service at home; 28% of Gateway City households did not have a computer at home. (MassINC)
- Access to a broadband service is on average approximately \$70 per month in Gateway Cities with setup fees around \$100 (MassINC).



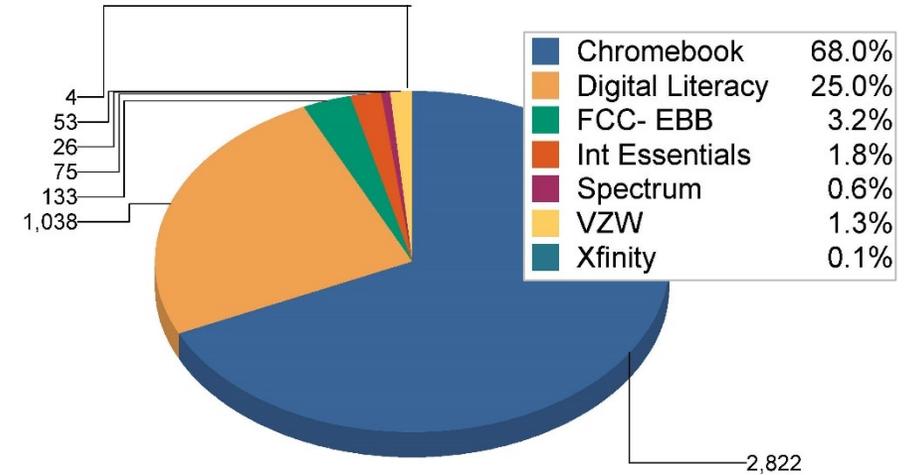


Mass Internet Connect Program Statistics from MassHire

Customers Served by MassHire Workforce Area

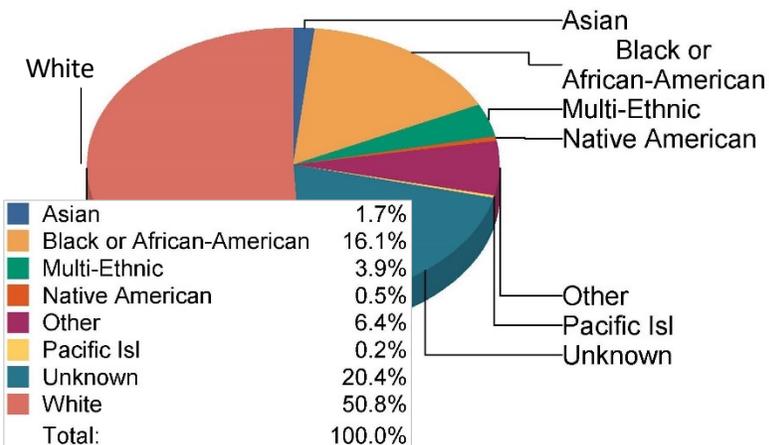


Referrals by Program Type

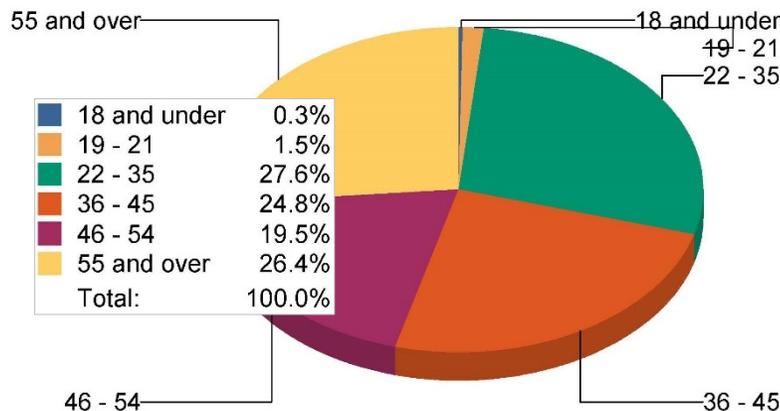


3,349 Total Customers - 291 Internet Subsidies - 2,822 Chromebooks - 1,038 Digital Literacy

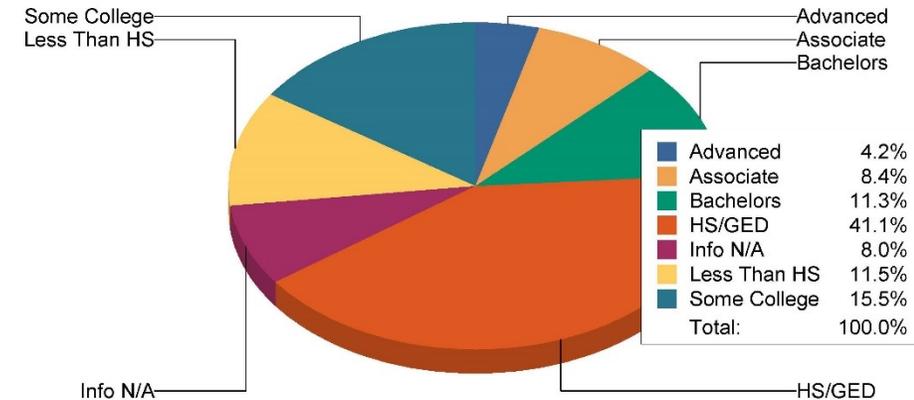
Customers By Race



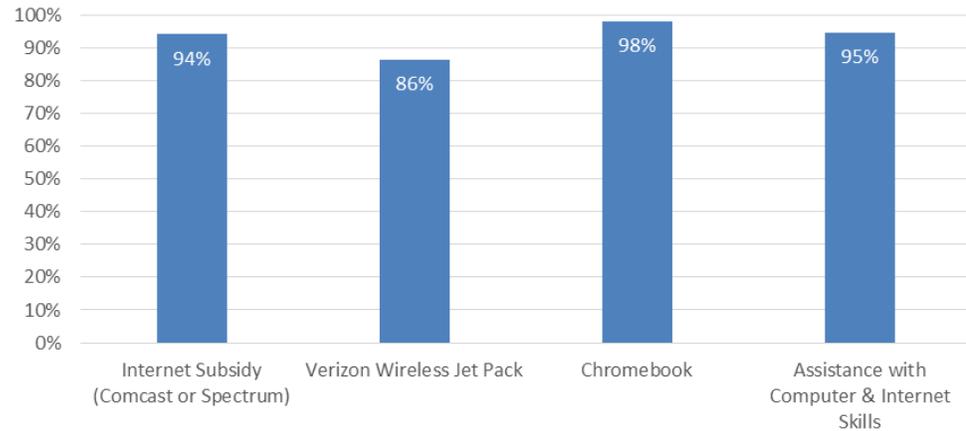
Customers By Age



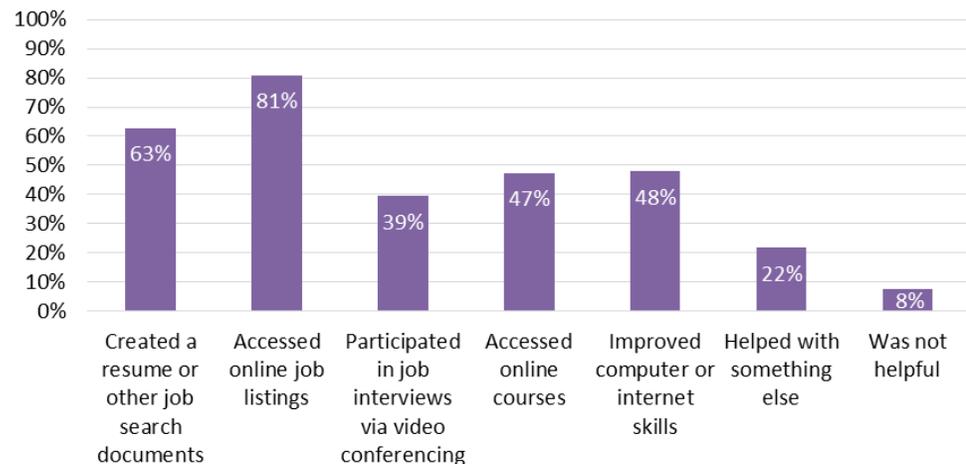
Customers By Education



Percentage of MIC survey respondents that found program supports to be valuable



How MIC survey respondents said the program supports helped them



“I would not have been able to search for jobs or make a resume without that chromebook. I'd never be able to afford one on my own I'm so grateful.”

“It has been very helpful having the Chromebook for taking online classes and searching for a new job.”

“Although I have not found employment yet, since receiving MIC benefits I have been able to accelerate my job search and I am experiencing positive results, e.g. scheduling more informational interviews and having a phone screen with a recruiter about a current opening. I have increased hope that I will be hired soon. Thank you for implementing this program! Initially I thought that it was too good to be true!”

“I am very grateful for the chrome book. It has helped me do my job search with more ease. The websites are easier to navigate from the chrome book rather than from my phone. “

“Im very grateful for the Verizon jet pack. I would not have been able to access the internet from home without it. It would have been extremely difficult for me to get online because there isn't any free internet access near my home and I don't have a vehicle.”

- ✓ MBI is working with grantees to support projects in 14 out of 26 Gateway Cities with approx. 51,000 households without broadband
- ✓ MBI has an open Notice of Funding Availability - <https://masstech.org/massachusetts-broadband-institute-notice-funding-availability-grants-gateway-cities-establish>

REGIONAL PARTNERS



Haverhill
Lawrence
Lynn
Methuen
Peabody
Salem



Chelsea
Everett
Malden
Revere
Quincy

Future digital equity pilot projects are expected to target:

- ✓ Telehealth
- ✓ Low Income and Senior Housing Residents
- ✓ Homeless Families In Transition to Permanent Housing

Salem – Mesh Wifi Network



Goal: Free community wifi for the Point neighborhood

Impact: 3,000 individuals

- Local Partners
- Community driven
- Cultural competency

Housing Authority Digital Access



- City or Housing Authority buys **1** very high-speed internet connection.
- WiFi Hot Spots or “Access Points” in common areas are linked to connection.
- Residents can access free, high-speed internet in their apartments without a subscription.

Proposed Baker-Polito Administration Investment of ARPA Funds to Close the Digital Divide – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds

Strategy	Funding	Funding Tactics	Types of Current Programs to Scale
Reaching Target Populations through Partnerships	\$17M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage trusted distribution partners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify target populations and barriers Tailor programs to ensure long-term adoption, utilization, and literacy Serve as a distribution channel to deliver support Establish centralized database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mass Internet Connect Partnership with MassHire Local Community Foundations Regional Planning Agencies Possible Target Populations & Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telehealth Consumers & Community Health Centers Targeted MassHealth Clients - HHS Long Term Services and Support Low Income Seniors - Public Housing Authorities, Senior Centers, Councils on Aging
Digital Literacy	\$15M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach people how to use devices and internet and build practical digital skills. Building block for other more advanced digital skills - modern workplace, navigating health care and other essential services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand digital literacy offerings for MassHire job seekers Train and deploy digital navigators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Education, Libraries, Workforce Training Centers, Community-Based Organizations, etc. Package support when possible (i.e. literacy training w/ device & internet service subsidy) Possible Partners for digital literacy content and training include: Tech Goes Home and National Digital Inclusion Alliance
Device and Service Plan Support	\$43M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get devices to people who need them but cannot afford them. Raise awareness and direct consumers to the federal EBB program, then deploy state subsidies post-EBB state to continue low cost service options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage and promote temporary EBB program, subsidize internet service post-termination of EBB & subsidize and increase access to devices Launch targeted PSA Campaign
Gap Networks	\$25M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access/connectivity in pocket locations - town edges, low density areas, low income urban areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in broadband infrastructure - long drops/unserved areas/line extensions, as well as network resiliency Expand community WiFi Hotspots and other wireless access options